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FORUM

Wild Zeitung—Translanguaging above and below the fold

Carlee Arnett[1] | **Harriett Jernigan**[2]

[1]Department of German and Russian, University of California Davis, Davis, California, USA

[2]Program in Writing and Rhetoric, Stanford University, Stanford, California, USA

Correspondence
Carlee Arnett, Department of German and Russian, University of California Davis, Davis, California, USA.
Email: clarnett@ucdavis.edu

Many discussions of diversity, equity, and inclusion recognize that language students from underrepresented groups often do not see themselves mirrored in the target culture. In addition, they may not see themselves represented, except in a course on multiculturalism in German literature, in the language classroom. Recently, there have been a number of articles and studies designed to address this issue (Anya, 2020; Criser & Malakaj, 2020; Von Esch et al., 2020) and many instructors are actively working on the issue of inclusion. With the exception of a few articles (cf. Layne, 2020), a discussion of what types of activities an instructor can use in the classroom to foster agency for the students in the target language has been absent. In this article, we present a project for an upper-division writing course that fosters student-centered learning. We aim for the students to be able to envision themselves as successful participants in the target culture. This can be accomplished through translanguaging (cf. Canagarajah, 2020).

TRANSLANGUAGING

Translanguaging research is popular in the fields of Teaching English as a Second Language (TESOL) and bilingual education, but the concept has only recently been transferred to the teaching of foreign language writing (Yang & Fan, 2022). Translanguaging refers to the process by which speakers use more than one linguistic code to make sense of and interact with the world around them. Vogel and García (2017) argue that rather than speakers having autonomous systems for each dialect or language, they have a unitary linguistic repertoire, which they use strategically to navigate their environment. In and outside of the classroom, students are encouraged to use their full linguistic repertoire without regard to the social or political dominance of one language variety over another (García & Wei, 2014). In this manner, translanguaging has been successfully used to address decolonization in the foreign language classroom, particularly the issue of language discrimination. Translanguaging provides an opportunity for students to express their varied identities and view their backgrounds as a resource to construct meaning as they encounter the multifaceted target culture(s). Further, translanguaging frees the students from the pressure to conform to the idea of a monolingual native speaker of the standard language (Milroy & Milroy, 1985, p. 19), a goal widely deemed unrealistic, impossible

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(which native speaker would a student emulate; Kramsch, 1998; Widdowson, 1994), and undesirable. Through translanguaging, students can become aware of the power structures embedded in languages and develop their own perspectives on language ideology. In this manner, students can become speakers "in their own right" (Cook, 1999, p. 185) and perform "cultural acts of identity" (Kramsch, 1998, p. 70).

Translanguaging allows the students to use their own linguistic and non-linguistic resources to create meaning in the target culture. In addition, the student becomes aware of the sociopolitical status of language varieties and can use acquired structures for creative and meaning-making purposes (Li, 2018). Translanguaging fosters dialogic pedagogy, peer interactions, and student-centered learning. Students can be made aware of translanguaging moments (Li, 2018) in their own negotiations with other students as well as in their writing. The classroom becomes a space for translanguaging, disrupting standard language ideology and negotiating meaning between the student in all of their social and linguistic complexity and products of the multifaceted target culture.

THE WILD ZEITUNG PROJECT

This project centers on giving students an opportunity to make meaning that includes and prioritizes underrepresented voices through the use of translanguaging. The students will engage in an analysis of a product from the target culture and then create their own project that showcases the aspects of their identities and communities as they see fit within the product of the target culture. The extended project is conducted within the context of mass media, specifically newspapers, asking students to create the front page of the broadsheet newspaper *Bild Zeitung* (*Bild*, https://www.bild.de/), common in the target culture, and featuring aspects of interest in the foreign-language learner culture. For the purposes of this project, we have named the student-created front pages Wild Zeitung, which is a whimsical play on *Bild Zeitung*.

WHY *BILD ZEITUNG?*

While *Bild* evokes a number of responses in members of German-speaking cultures, ranging from annoyance to disgust—often a factor of class and class preferences—statistics bear out the newspaper's historical and contemporary significance. It is and has for decades been the most widely read newspaper in Germany, with a daily distribution of 7.82 million readers in print and online (Media Impact, 2023; Statista Research Department, 2022), and it enjoys robust distribution in Switzerland and Austria as well. The newspaper possesses a number of distinguishing characteristics, particularly when juxtaposed with newspapers considered representative of the *Leitkultur*, the dominant culture, such as *Die Welt*, *Die Zeit*, and *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. Instead of leading with current events, *Bild* leads with stories of a more pragmatic or sensational nature, balanced by stories that address the questions and concerns of the "average" German citizen, which according to *Bild's* press kit includes readers from the ages of 14 and above (Media Impact, 2023). Stories above the fold on the front page typically focus on German celebrities and scandals, how to mitigate the cost of living increases, and sports. Below the fold, *Bild* tends to focus on human interest stories, showcasing unknown citizens, and advertisements of sales at various supermarket chains.

Because of its reach and content, *Bild* has had a massive impact on the public sphere domestically and abroad, from influencing German legislation in the 1960s and 1990s to reporting on Florida-Rolf in the United States in the 2000s. Angela Merkel used *Bild* to gauge public opinion or at least how it was being manipulated (Coremedia, 2014). Additionally, because of the content it offers, *Bild* represents a variety of cultures, some dominant and some underrepresented, that occur along the economic spectrum. For example, an article on Deutsche Bank represents a small, but dominant culture, but an

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article on LBGTQIA+ players on the pro-tennis circuit does not. Although some may object to using *Bild* as a platform for translanguaging due to its tendency to negatively represent marginalized and underrepresented peoples, scholarship has consistently demonstrated that *Bild* is no more or no less marginalizing than *FAZ*, *Die Zeit*, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *Fokus*, and *Der Spiegel* (cf. Henrichsen et al., 2022; Holzberg et al, 2018; Korienation, 2020; Mysorekar, 2018). When taking this into consideration alongside the fact that *Bild's* vocabulary and syntactic structures are perfectly aligned with the advanced German learner's proficiency levels, while other more prestigious publications are not, *Bild* is actually an ideal locus of translanguaging for German learners.

This project is targeted toward students beyond the first two years of language learning who are enrolled in an advanced class at a college or university. Therefore, we would expect differing ability, gender, socioeconomic class, and ethnicity as well as diversity that we do not see such as neuroatypicality, family background, and so forth. Operating on the assumption that underrepresented students rarely see themselves represented in instructional content, nor have an opportunity to express their identity in the foreign language classroom, this project ideally gives students an opportunity to showcase aspects of themselves and their cultures that might otherwise remain unacknowledged.

THE PROJECT

First, the instructor will introduce the class to *Bild*, facilitating acquisition of basic information about content, market, distribution, and history. Students will develop an understanding of the sociopolitical role *Bild* has played in German society since the 1960s and its critical reception. Students will then analyze and reflect on *Bild's* layout, understanding that they will use this layout for the project. At this time, students will also analyze the paragraph and sentence structure of the front-page articles in terms of the level of vocabulary, number of words, complexity, foregrounding, and connection. Students will work in self-selected small groups for the duration of the project. They will showcase traditions and rhetorical practices of their community or communities by selecting and sharing images from their archives or taking pictures of events, occasions, or other cultural and communal aspects. Students can pick whatever they choose.

Once students have collected their images, they must then act as an editorial board and choose the images they will use, typically eight to ten images. In the editorial process, students will negotiate the meaning that they want to represent and, by doing so, will engage in the process of translanguaging. At this point, the instructor could make notes of the phrases used at the moment of negotiation, or translanguaging, and show the students at a later time how this process works at the level of language; that is, syntax and vocabulary choice.

Once the editorial boards have chosen their images, they will then draft texts to correspond to the images. They will mimic *Bild's* vocabulary and syntactic structure. Once texts of three to four sentences have been drafted, students will share their images and texts with the class, to receive feedback on style, with an emphasis on whether the text fully encapsulates the spirit of the image and mimics the language of the different stories. It is at this stage that the instructor could work on writing at the level of the clause more closely so students can be made aware of the choices they need to make at the lexical and syntactic levels to express their intended meaning.

When students have completed their peer feedback, they regroup in their editorial boards and write the full text. The length of texts will vary according to layout and topic, a flexibility that allows for differentiation in productive writing skills. Then students will use an online platform that provides newspaper templates and finalize their layout, ensuring that they adhere to the majority of the conventions of the *Bild* layout, particularly the content placed traditionally above and below the fold.

Upon completion of the front page, students engage in reflection, which takes place in two phases: a presentation to the class and then a separate written reflection. The presentation focuses on editorial choices, why the board chose certain stories and images and why they thought they would appeal to a German speaker. The written reflection focuses on how they experienced making meaning in the

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process of translanguaging, and how someone like themselves might come to and experience their community or communities.

DISRUPTION OF THE STATUS QUO

The student-created newspaper provides the environment in which meaning is made, where underrepresented students can bring their authentic selves and identity to their intercultural learning. By giving students a safe space between cultures in which to contemplate their place in the target culture—and conversely the place of a member in the target culture in their context—we strike a balance between the pedagogical goals of transmitting information and cultural values and ensuring that instruction remains inclusive.

ORCID

Carlee Arnett https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7190-0220

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AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

Carlee Arnett (Ph.D., University of Michigan) is a Professor of German at the University of California, Davis, and Director of the Davis Language Center. Her interests include the research and teaching of grammar to L2 students of German and creating student-centered learning materials. She is currently working on new methods to teach writing to upper-division language students. She was the language coordinator at Davis for 17 years, and she teaches and gives workshops on new methods in foreign language pedagogy.

Harriett Jernigan (Ph.D., Stanford) is a faculty member in the Program in Writing and Rhetoric at Stanford University, who specializes in writing across the disciplines, second language acquisition and German language, literature, and culture. In her PWR course, The Rhetorics of Ethnic and Racial Identity, she explores the manner, in which narratives of ethnic and racial identity play a pivotal role in contemporary social and political discourses.

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